

Vaughn: Kishwaukee United Way's 2-1-1 Program is expanding its reach

By Michele Vaughn - Kishwaukee United Way
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Kishwaukee United Way's 2-1-1 program is a free information and referral line populated with local resources. The most non-emergency requested resources from DeKalb County residents continue to be rental assistance, food pantries, utility assistance, and transportation. (Image Provided by Kishwaukee United Way)

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Kishwaukee United Way's 2-1-1 helpline in partnership with PATH, Inc. (People Acting to Help) submitted a client testimonial from a single mom caller, who was requesting assistance applying for an extension on her taxes. She is the legal guardian of twin boys and receives assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, but was unsure how to maximize tax-related assistance for childcare. We referred her to a pro-bono tax accountant, but she was also generally lonely and thankful to have someone with whom she could discuss the struggles of raising two young boys on her own with a limited income.

This was not her first call to 2-1-1. She spoke highly of previous experiences with the crisis line and mentioned having several friends who regularly sought referrals through 2-1-1. She

expressed gratitude both for the referral and the volunteers in general. In her social circle, 2-1-1 volunteers have a shining reputation for being welcoming, judgment-free and helpful.

United Way is now expanding the reach of 2-1-1 through its new social media community Live United Talk Show, which highlights various local community agencies, leaders and resources to local DeKalb residents in need. The show airs on Facebook @ United Way Kishwaukee's public page weekly to all viewers. Most recently, the show aired interviews with the following organizations (RAMP - Center for Independent Living, Youth Outlook, FLAP-Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project and Adventure Works). The goal is to create a greater awareness of free resources available to DeKalb residents.

The 2-1-1 networks in the United States respond to more than 21 million requests for help every year. Most calls, web chats and text messages are from people seeking help meeting basic needs like housing, food, transportation and health care. Thousands of caring, local experts are available to help, 24/7. Calls to 2-1-1 are confidential and can be anonymous.

United Way 2-1-1 is for times of crisis and everyday needs. There are 2-1-1 call specialists available 24/7 to help callers find services such as mortgage, rent and utility assistance, food, emergency shelter, health care, counseling, support groups, etc., available in their communities.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, speak with a live operator to get connected to help in DeKalb County. If you're interested in becoming a guest on the Live United 2-1-1 talk show, submit a request to info@kishwaukeeunitedway.com.

To learn more about Kishwaukee United Way, visit kishwaukeeunitedway.com.

- Michele Vaughn, Ed.D., is executive director/president of Kishwaukee United Way.



Kishwaukee United Way Executive Director and President Michele Vaughn, Ed.D. (Photo Provided by Kishwaukee United Way)